



Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools

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To: Members of the State Board of Education

From: Nancy S. Grasmick

Date: March 29-30, 2004

Re: Resolution to Convene a Task Force on Comparable Methods of Measuring Student Achievement in English I, algebra/data analysis, government, and biology

PURPOSE:

To ask the State Superintendent of Schools to convene a task force to examine comparable assessment options and other options for ascertaining student skills and knowledge in the subjects of English I, algebra/data analysis, government, and biology.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

In February 2004, the State Board granted permission to publish revised graduation regulations that would link High School Assessment performance to the Maryland High School Diploma beginning with the graduating class of 2009. Through its extensive outreach efforts, the Department has learned that some education stakeholders are concerned that students with disabilities and other students with special needs may have difficulty demonstrating their knowledge in a traditional test setting, such as with the High School Assessments. As a response to these concerns, we are proposing that the Department convene a task force that will examine comparable methods of measuring student knowledge and skills in English I, algebra/data analysis, government, and biology. This task force would examine options for comparable measurements of student knowledge and skills related to the High School Assessments and would make recommendations regarding the feasibility of implementing one or more of those options as a part of the assessment requirements for high school graduation.

ACTION:

Vote to approve a resolution that would formally ask the State Superintendent of Schools to convene a task force on comparable methods of measuring student achievement in English I, algebra/data analysis, government, and biology.

NSG:lkp

Attachment I—Proposed Resolution

Maryland State Board of Education

Resolution, March 2004

Whereas, the Maryland State Board of Education is considering a requirement that students pass the High School Assessments as a graduation requirement for the graduating class of 2009; and

Whereas, some education stakeholders are concerned that students with disabilities and other students with special challenges may have difficulty demonstrating their knowledge through a traditional setting;

Whereas, some states in the nation are exploring alternate methods of ascertaining student skills and knowledge that can be accessed by students with disabilities and other students with special challenges;

Whereas, the Maryland State Board of Education seeks to raise standards and improve achievement for all children;

Now therefore, the Maryland State Board of Education hereby requests that Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, convene a task force to examine comparable options for ascertaining student skills and knowledge in the subjects of English I, algebra/data analysis, government, and biology. Specifically, the task force should:

1. Convene by September 2004, provide periodic updates to the Board, and present a final report to the State Board by September 2007.
2. Represent a broad range of stakeholders, including state, local, and school-level educators, higher education representatives, advocates for students with special needs, parents, and students.
3. Involve state and national authorities who represent a broad range of views on this topic.
4. Examine issues related to alternate assessments, including the following questions:
 - a. What would be the requirements of a comparable measure of student achievement?
 - b. How would such a measure be implemented in Maryland?
 - c. To which students should a comparable measure be available?
 - d. How would such a comparable measure be designed to ensure acceptance by higher education and employers?
 - e. What are the estimated costs associated with comparable assessments in Maryland?
 - f. How could Maryland ensure that a comparable assessment option would be used only as an option of last resort, so that educators, parents, and students first focus on achieving success on the Maryland High School Assessments?

Edward Root
President
Maryland State Board of Education

